

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF ELECTORAL REFORM

"A STUDY OF THE GENERAL ELECTION IN (1922)"

by

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"The House of Commons of Canada has found no insuperable difficulty in adapting itself to a situation in which no party possessed a clear parliamentary majority over all others.

After the last general election the Liberal party, although the largest, was in a minority of one. Yet the Liberal administration, formed before dissolution under Mr. Mackenzie King, seems to have been highly successful during the past year (1922) and there is every prospect of its continuing in office.

It is true that owing to some by-election successes the Liberal party has now a majority of three or four. But this is by no means what would be regarded as a working majority by politicians of the past generation.

An article by the parliamentary correspondent of the *Ottawa Citizen*, January 20, 1923, explains that the success of the administration was traceable "to the consultation of parliament in a real rather than in a formal way."—"It was a democratic government in an advanced degree."

THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION, 1906

"We recommend the adoption of the alternative vote in cases where more than two candidates stand for one seat. We do not recommend its application to two member constituencies but we submit that the question of the retention of such constituencies, which are anomalous, should be considered as soon as an opportunity offers. Of schemes for producing P.R. we think that the transferable vote would have the best chance of ultimate acceptance but we are unable to recommend its adoption in existing circumstances for election to the House of Commons."

(University Representation.—The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge each elect two members, the Universities of Durham, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol and Wales, grouped with London, three members, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen three members. All of the University members are elected by Proportional Representation with a transferable vote).

REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION (GREAT BRITAIN)

Appointed to enquire into electoral systems, 1908

Para. 105.—The exaggeration of majorities is as a rule no evil. Excessive majorities of course occur; but they bring their own correction against tyranny in increased independence; and they are at least preferable to insufficient majorities. The advocates of the transferable vote remind us that the object of a representative body is to represent; but the object of representative government is not only to represent but to govern. The greatest evil that can befall a country is a weak executive; and if a strong one can only be obtained at a cost of mathematical accuracy the price should be willingly paid.

Para. 110.—From the point of view of the candidate and member the objections are equally serious.... It is agreed that if the scheme is to work to the best advantage constituencies of from 7 to 9 members at least are necessary, and that results adequate to the importance of the change cannot be expected from constituencies of less than 5. This means that the expenses of contesting a constituency—canvassing, printing, circulating posters and leaflets and travelling will be multiplied in the same proportion.